

Historic District Commission

November 19, 2020

Final Minutes

Call Meeting To Order: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, called meeting to order at 7:00 pm via ZOOM.

Members Present: Patrick Gordon, Chairman, Pam Gjettum, Clerk, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep., Grayson Shephard

Applicants: Andrew Rocco and Robert Lang

New Business: Public Hearings: The application of Robert Lang (on behalf of 154 Water Street Co. LLC) for a change in appearance to the existing structure located at 28 Front Street. Case #20-9. Robert Lang, a contractor out of Exeter spoke and he is working on 28 Front Street. He went and got a building permit from Doug Eastman. They purchased the siding which is vinyl cedar impressions siding for the front of the building. It has a wooden block siding on it now that is rotting out and he said they cannot replace it. On the rest of the building, they had applied to put straight vinyl siding on it. They got about one third of the way up the front and Doug called him and asked him to stop because he had made a mistake and you cannot put vinyl siding on a building in the Historic District. He said he told Doug that he has done other historic buildings like the Sears Building and the McReell Building on Water Street. Other buildings on Front Street, High Street and Water Street have vinyl siding, vinyl windows and doors and have vinyl shutters. They purchased the vinyl siding and he cannot return it. He has about \$7,000 invested in it and about \$4,000 in labor to date to put up and take down what they have already done. He is asking the commission to show some leniency to allow them to do the project. They applied for a permit and were granted a permit and they were working under that when Doug realized they were in a Historic District and asked them to stop, which they did for him. Patrick said that Robert did provide a couple of images of the work that had been started for the commission to see and he took a ride by the project today. It appears that what is there is what looks like an unfinished product. Robert said they are cedar impressions. Patrick asked if they would be a cedar shake style and Robert said they would be. He said it is not like vinyl siding at all. He said it is more of a New England style than what is there now. Patrick asked at the time of the permitting, he was aware that the structure was within a Historic District. Robert said he was and he also put that on the permit. Patrick then asked if he was given the Historic Guidelines and Robert said he was not. Julie asked if Robert said a little while ago that above the first floor where they have already started putting in the shakes, the rest of it is going to be flat or shakes. Robert said it will be shakes and the front only. He said the front and the rest of the building are not the same style now. He said they would keep the same look on the rest of the building that it already has and the front would be impressions with cedar shakes. It would be two different looks to the building identical to what it is now as far as two different styles.

Robert said he wished he could have handed the commission the sample he brought of the cedar impressions he brought to the meeting. Patrick asked what was the desire to cover the existing ones over. He also asked what is the issue with the existing that is there now. Robert said they are rotting out and there is rot all over the front of it. Patrick said this is not uncommon with a home of this age. Robert said it is not but trying to replace those would be a nightmare. He said they are part of the framework of the building. If you take it apart, you cannot seal it back up again. He loves the look of it but it always causes a maintenance nightmare to try and keep up with it. Robert said if one of the members wanted to meet him down at the property, he could show them the material and what his thoughts were on how to install it and show what is wrong with what is there now. This would give you a better idea of what they are trying to do with it. Patrick said he would be a lot more comfortable with doing something like that because right now covering the existing detail and not repairing it in kind the way it is now would be a loss of that. It would be another building that you could lose finish and that pattern. Julie said that she would like to have a visit like that. She said the treatment on her house is the same as this. She would like to go out and talk about her experience and his experience with this. Robert said that would be fantastic. Patrick said he would be inclined to set up a site visit. He can call for a motion to do this. Pam said she votes for a site walk because it sounds like an excellent idea. Patrick wanted to make it clear that they will not be making a decision at the site walk. Robert said he realizes that and at least he can show them what they are doing, what their intentions were, why they are doing it and then the commission can go back and talk about it and decide what you want. Patrick then asked if there was a second for the motion. Julie seconded. All were in favor and motion passed. Patrick then asked for a motion to table the application until next month after the site walk. Julie made the motion to table it. Pam seconded. All were in favor and application tabled.

Next is the application of Andrew M. Rocco for the proposed construction of a new single family home on the property located at 4 Rocky Hill. Case #20-10. Andrew said the lot they are talking about his dad bought about sixty years ago and he recently bought it from him. They did the sub division back in August and not realizing it was in a Historical District, he always just thought the house would be 200 feet off the road. The problem is that he has eleven acres there but there is a very small amount of buildable lot because the hospital's parking lot when they filled it all in caused wetlands. He pushed the house back as far as possible along the lot. The commission has a package of the site work. It is coming in at 173.9 and he is about 26 feet shy. He said he went around and talked to all the neighbors and explained to them the type of house he wanted to build. He has letters from abutters saying they do not mind a contemporary house going in on Rocky Hill. He wants to get the commission's thoughts on him building a contemporary house. You will not be able to see it from High Street. He said he is open to suggestions or questions. Julie said if you look at the High Street Historic District, it is made up of every era building. There is nothing that says you cannot build a contemporary building. What they are looking at is how it fits into that part of the neighborhood because it is new construction. Andrew said the first floor is going to be the garage and the second floor is where they will live. He said it will fit nicely into the neighborhood and it is not a big house. Pam said she does not have any questions or comments. She thinks it fits in the neighborhood and he had letters from his neighbors saying they all liked it. Patrick said he does not have any issue

with this building being in this setting being in this lot in particular. The way that it drops away from the street, the way that one of the major abutters is the hospital and anyone who is in the parking lot of the hospital would not know that they are bordering a historic district from the back sides of these houses. Grayson agreed with what Patrick and Pam said that it fits into the neighborhood with that style. Julie said that she really appreciates it when somebody comes in and gives some thought to new construction going into an area that has had buildings that have been here for over fifty years. She feels it is appropriate for that particular area. Patrick then said that he felt they had enough information to call for a motion to accept the application as complete before deliberating on approval or denial. Pam made the motion to accept the application. Julie seconded. All were in favor and application accepted. Before Patrick closed the public hearing, he reached out to any abutters or anyone from the public. There were none and he closed the public meeting. The meeting was then opened up to the members for any questions or discussions they may have. Julie asked Andrew if there would be columns put up to hold the deck and he said there would be. He said it made more sense to ask the commission for forgiveness than come to this meeting. Patrick said he wanted to clear the air about asking for forgiveness. He said this is completely appropriate. A contemporary house can be put in any Historic District as long as it fits in. Andrew said he appreciates the education and he learned a lot tonight. At this time, Patrick called for a motion to approve the application. Julie said so moved. Grayson seconded. All were in favor and application approved. Patrick told Andrew to see Barbara and Doug in the Planning Office to get the Certificate Of Appropriateness.

Next under Other Business is the approval of September 17th and October 15th minutes. After reviewing the September 17th minutes and making a few changes, Pam made a motion to approve minutes as amended. Grayson seconded. All were in favor and minutes approved. There were not enough members present to approve the October 15th minutes so Julie made a motion to table these minutes until the December meeting. Pam seconded. All were in favor and minutes tabled.

Pam wanted the commission to know that someone is interested in buying 110 High Street. Julie said that when they meet with the fellow from Front Street, drive by her house, 96 High Street and take a look at the front over the bay window because that is where she had some repair done and let her know if you can tell the difference. Patrick said that he had wished that Curtis had been on the meeting tonight because he feels that he has experience with this in terms of the detailing necessary to properly water proof things like this. He is hoping that Curtis is available for the site walk because he is a good resource.

Grayson said that he is not sure who will be scheduling the site walk, but the week of December 7th, he is completely booked out. Patrick asked Julie if she was aware of any other homes in town that have that exterior finish. Julie said yes, also on High Street, the lower end, the purple house and there are also a couple on Front Street.

With no further business, Julie made a motion to adjourn. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary